

Belmont Human Rights Commission
Belmont Town Hall
October 5, 2006

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Cynthia Bannon, Janet Cudmore-Boswell, Laurie Graham, Moez Rawji, Donna Ruvolo, Fran Yuan (Chair)

Members Absent: Judie Feins, Rosalind Kabrhel, Cheryl Morrissey and Connie Williams

Guests and Liaisons Present: Kathryn Bonfiglio (Belmont Against Racism), Hildy Dvorak (Council on Aging), Lt. Peter Hoerr (Belmont Police Department) and Mary Keenan (Belmont Public Library)

1. The Chair called the meeting to order. Janet Boswell volunteered to take the minutes.
2. The Board took a few minutes to express their sadness in the passing of Bill Rudman, a member of the Board.
3. The Board discussed filling the vacancy left by Bill's passing. Paul Solomon suggested reaching out and trying to enlist more males for the Board. Perhaps someone can research a database of volunteers to seek out a new member. Paul was more than willing to take suggestions from Board on other avenues for obtaining volunteer names.
4. Fran brought up for discussion the charge of the Commission. The Board talked about determining exactly what are we, what role should we have in the community, how to get information out to the community on what we do and how to set our priorities. No final decision was made except that the Board will continue to develop strategies to address the issues.
5. Fran brought up filling the Vice Chair vacancy. Laurie had previously volunteered; the Board was asked if anyone opposed Laurie filling the position. No one did.
6. Fran brought up the business of bringing new liaisons to the table. Laurie spoke about a new liaison at the Middle School. Donna inquired about contacting the Interfaith Council for programs that the Commission might take part in.
7. Fran spoke about the Belmont Center pedestrian tunnel artwork and how she had communicated with the community service coordinator at the high school about having high schools kids paint the tunnel and having it credited as community service. Peter spoke about the possibility of having the paint donated and having donated food from local restaurants. Permission from the town is needed. Peter volunteered to take care of this.
8. The subject of the "No Place for Hate" slogan and sign was discussed with the focus on a permanent spot for the sign. This needs to be resolved, since the Library will only display the sign for six weeks. It was asked if the slogan "No Place for Hate" could be placed on the town's letterhead.
9. The Board discussed obtaining visibility through the newspaper column. Fran suggested we should make the effort to attend the Mass. Association of Human Rights panel presentation in Newton. A notice of the event could be put into the town's newspaper. Donna suggested a "post meeting" article stating it was a good way to inform the public about us and what is happening across the state. Laurie said she was planning to attend the panel discussion and will take notes. It was decided a short announcement would be placed in the newspaper prior to the event.

10. Moez took time to talk about partnering with the Belmont World Film event at the Belmont Studio. He talked to the women in charge of the event about the movies being presented. The movies, *The Color of Paradise* (disabilities theme) and *Bread and Chocolate* (racism and economic volatility) are two of the movies he suggested we could sponsor. He feels that maybe we could collaborate with the Disabilities Commission and Belmont Against Racism in sponsoring these films. These could be shown during Diversity Week. It was suggested we work with the appropriate teachers at the high school to encourage students to attend the films during Diversity Week and have the students write essays about the film topics. He will talk further with those in charge of Belmont World Film to see if they are interested in this idea.

11. Moez suggested a newspaper article discussing the two films and the subject of the films. He will pursue this subject. Another suggestion was to have a panel discussion before a small audience.

12. Donna brought up the possibility of having Bill Meikle, from Arlington, come to a panel discussion. Bill is a Ben Franklin impersonator, and as Ben he could discuss human rights issue in his time and how we face some of the same issues. It was suggested that we serve wine and cheese to attract people to the event. Mary has seen him perform and said he was very good. The question was raised about Bill's knowledge of history and human rights issue. Donna will pursue. The issue of how to pay for this came up and Donna talked about writing a grant proposal to cover the cost.

13. Paul thinks the Commission needs visibility, and programs (ideas) like the ones under discussion are a very good start.

14. Donna thinks we need to discuss "button pushing" issues. Fran questioned do we want to always bring up controversial subjects. Donna, Janet and Moez discussed the negative versus positive spin on issues. Donna and Janet praised the town for what it has accomplished to date. Janet stated that she thought that the town had come a long way in human rights issues. The Board talked about how the town quietly in non-confrontational ways was accepting of people with different life styles, whether relating to gay parents or different religions.

15. Janet brought up the problems that she sees coming with the 40B developments. She feels that we should be proactive. In her opinion, the problems will be a form of economic discrimination.

16. Kathryn briefly spoke about the speaker coming to the Chenery to talk about bullying and cyberbullying. The Board voted unanimously to co-sponsor this event. Kathryn also spoke about the plans for the MLK breakfast. At the breakfast, there will be a speaker and panel discussing youth violence, very relevant to Belmont since the senseless death of Herman Taylor.

17. There was a brief discussion of launching a "Belmont Reads" series. Mary thought the library would support it.

18. The September 7th minutes were approved as amended.

19. The Board unanimously voted to appoint Laurie as Vice Chair.

20. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Cudmore-Boswell

